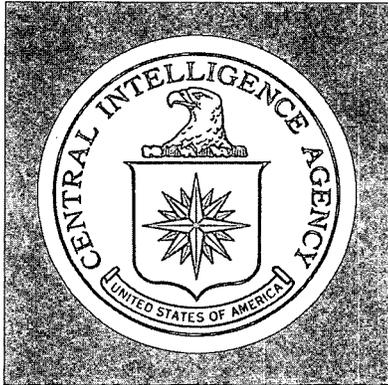


Top Secret

(22)



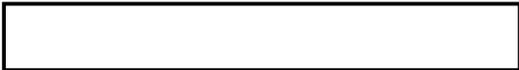
25X1

MEMORANDUM

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

The Situation in Vietnam

25X1



Top Secret

112

24 January 1967

Page Denied

[Redacted]

25X1

Information as of 1600
24 January 1967

[Redacted]

25X1

HIGHLIGHTS

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1

[Redacted] The Communists are using Route 23 to move large numbers of southbound trucks through the Laotian panhandle.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Bad weather is hampering allied ground operations in the northern sections of South Vietnam (Para. 1). Two Americans were killed and 19 wounded as the result of a nine-hour engagement in Bien Hoa Province on 23 January (Para. 2). Light contact has been reported as allied troops of Operation CEDAR FALLS continue to sweep the Iron Triangle area of Binh Duong Province (Paras. 4-5). A recently captured Viet Cong document indicated many weaknesses in a Communist logistics group subordinate to COSVN (Paras. 6-10). The Communist attack on Tan Son Nhut Airfield on 4-5 December was apparently against orders (Paras. 11-12).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

[Redacted]

25X1

25X1

[Redacted] An ethnic highlander has been appointed as the chief of Pleiku Province (Paras. 4-5). A Liberation Front broadcast has denied that central committee member Nguyen Van Hieu was recently interviewed in South Vietnam by a British woman journalist (Para. 6).

[Redacted]

25X1

[Redacted]

25X1



IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There
is nothing of significance to report.

VI. Other Major Aspects: The Communists are
using Route 23 to move large numbers of trucks south
through the Laotian panhandle (Paras. 1-5).

24 January 1967





I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Flooded terrain, swollen streams and rivers, and restricted helicopter resupply because of low ceilings and poor visibility have continued to hamper ground operations in the northern parts of South Vietnam, and no significant contact between allied and Communist forces has been reported recently in the two northern corps tactical zones.

2. On 23 January, a company of the US 9th Infantry Division about 26 miles east of Saigon in Bien Hoa Province was attacked with small-arms fire by an enemy force estimated to be larger than a company. Close air support was called in, but the enemy force did not withdraw until after nearly nine hours of battle. American losses were two killed and 19 wounded; Viet Cong losses are not known.

3. In the same general area, US troops fired on an enemy position early on 24 January. Ten Communist troops were reported killed. No other contact was reported and there were no American casualties.

4. Scattered light contacts continue as the multibattalion allied Operation CEDAR FALLS sweeps the Iron Triangle area of Binh Duong Province north of Saigon. One US company engaged a company-size Viet Cong unit on 24 January. Eight enemy troops were killed and three captured.

5. US casualties in this 18-day-old drive to clear the Iron Triangle area are now 73 killed and 320 wounded compared with 679 Viet Cong killed. Allied forces have also captured 198 enemy soldiers and rounded up nearly 500 suspects for questioning.

Viet Cong Logistical Difficulties in Military Region I

6. A recently captured Viet Cong document evaluates the projected mission of a logistics

24 January 1967

I-1



group for the last quarter of 1966 and the first quarter of 1967 in the light of its past performance. The document pointed up a great many internal weaknesses in the group and indicated that allied operations had severely hindered its activities.

7. The document originated, probably in the latter part of 1966, with the party committee of Group 84, whose mission is to provide logistics support for Viet Cong units operating in the Phuoc Tuy - Bien Hoa - Long Khanh Province area and in the Rung Sat Special Zone. Among these units is the 5th Viet Cong Light Infantry Division.

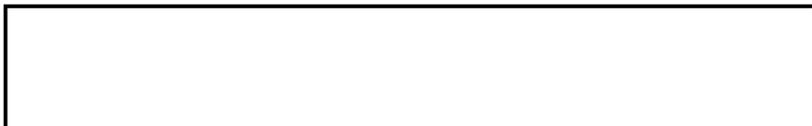
8. Although the document admitted that serious difficulties were caused by allied military operations in the group's area, primary emphasis was given to internal problems. These included poor discipline and ideological control, irresponsibility, laziness, graft, and fear of hardship among the group's members, as well as poor coordination with other logistics organizations in the area. Corruption appeared to be a major problem: estimates based, according to the document, on incomplete information indicated that losses through waste and corruption alone had amounted to enough to supply 10,000 troops for three months. Much of the blame was placed on cadres and party members. According to the document, 73.5 percent of the unit's approximately 1,030 men were either party or Revolutionary Youth Group members.

9. Allied military operations during 1966 in the group's area, the document complained, had "depopulated and destroyed" Viet Cong villages, "devastated" the Viet Cong rice crop, and obstructed the movement of supplies to Communist units. Both manpower and supply reserves were greatly reduced, and transportation difficulties became critical as a result of allied attacks on Communist base areas and lines of communication.

10. The document claimed that because of the group's internal problems and the difficulties caused

24 January 1967

I-2



[REDACTED]

by allied actions, support for Communist military units was very poor, and resultant supply shortages caused a "significant reduction" in combat capability. Military units were forced to spend most of their time in "administrative" tasks, presumably in procuring their own supplies, to the neglect of military activities. The document placed particular emphasis on tighter discipline and better morale as a means of overcoming the group's problems.

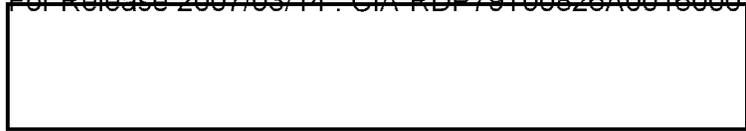
VC Violate Order Not to Carry Out Attack

11. A Viet Cong letter captured during Operation CEDAR FALLS indicates that the attack on the Tan Son Nhut Airfield on the night of 4-5 December was carried out without specific orders and that an unsuccessful attempt was made to stop the raid before it occurred. According to the letter, the Current Affairs Committee of VC Military Region IV had ordered an attack only on three bomb depots, and the Binh Tan District (Gia Dinh Province) Current Affairs Committee ordered that larger scale attack plans be dropped because the raid "was deemed too daring and risky to be carried out." Plans had moved along too far, however, and the order was received too late to stop the attack.

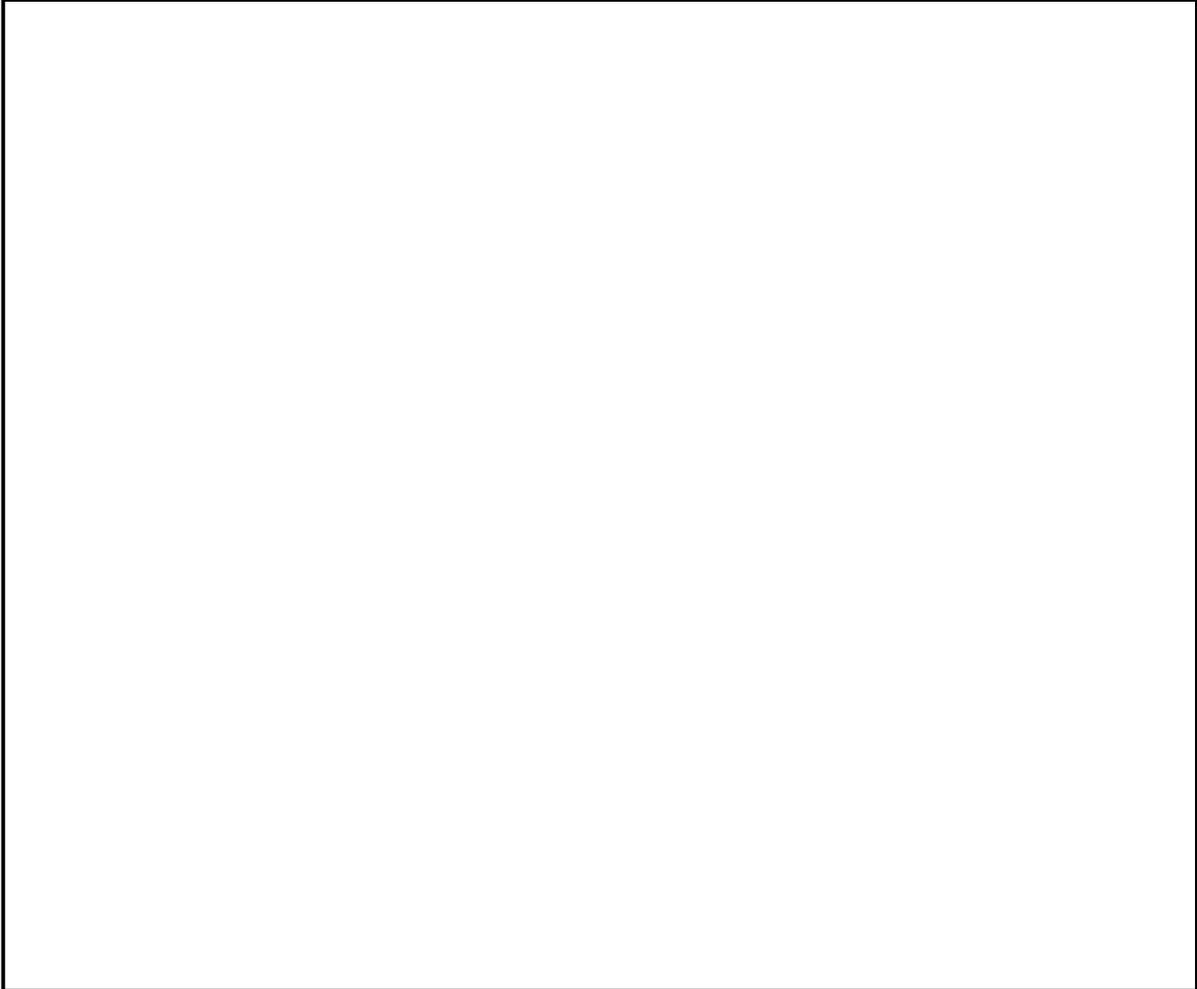
12. According to the letter, the results of the attack--in which the Viet Cong lost 35 killed and captured along with 29 weapons--lowered the troops' morale. The letter further revealed that party leadership during the attack was extremely poor, that reconnaissance information was inaccurate, and that the assessment of friendly capabilities was incorrect.

24 January 1967

I-3



II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM



First Montagnard Province Chief Appointed

4. General Vinh Loc, commander of II Corps, has designated an ethnic highlander from the Jarai Tribe as the chief of Pleiku Province, but his motive for doing so is questionable. The new appointee, Nay Lo, is the first montagnard to become a province chief; this position has traditionally been one of great influence at the local level.

24 January 1967

II-1



[REDACTED]

5. Nay Lo is the former commander of the Montagnard Training Center in Pleiku. Although pleased that a montagnard has been named to head a province, most highlanders in and out of the government do not consider Nay Lo sufficiently decisive or competent to handle such a strategic role. They reportedly fear that he will follow the guidance of his deputy--also a highlander, but considered close to Vinh Loc--and that he might as a result, make mistakes and bring discredit to the montagnards.

Front Radio Denies Report of Interview

6. The Liberation Front's press agency, in an "authorized" statement broadcast on 24 January, has denied that Nguyen Van Hieu, a member of the Front's central committee, had a recent interview in South Vietnam with British journalist Gloria Stewart as reported in the British press on 19 January. The Front statement referred to the alleged interview as a "hoax." It made no specific comment on Miss Stewart's claim that Hieu indicated the Front was ready for "unconditional negotiations" with the US.

24 January 1967

II-2

[REDACTED]

25X1

Page Denied

Next 2 Page(s) In Document Denied



IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

24 January 1967

IV-V - 1



VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The Communists are using Route 23 to move large numbers of southbound trucks through the Laotian panhandle.

2. A roadwatch team located on Route 23 between Muong Phine and the Route 911 junction reports that approximately 225 trucks moved south past its position during a five-day period it observed the road in mid-January. This is the largest reported movement of trucks south of the Mu Gia Pass area since the dry season began last October. It suggests that--as in past years--the enemy is maintaining much of the supply flow in the corridor through the sporadic movement of large convoys. Such movement makes it particularly difficult to estimate traffic levels from incomplete coverage of the road system.

3. The recent movement on Route 23 is also the first heavy use of that road since the 1964-65 dry season. Last year, the enemy relied almost exclusively on Route 911, which runs parallel to Route 23. The reopening of Route 23 provides the Communists with an alternate truck route between the Mu Gia and Tchepone areas, making this section of the road system less vulnerable to interruption by US air strikes.

4. The Communists are also continuing to move substantial numbers of trucks into Laos through the Mu Gia Pass. Roadwatch teams have spotted some 145 trucks moving south through the pass between 12 and 17 January. These trucks are almost certainly not the same as those observed farther south on Route 23 during the same time period. A total of about 340 southbound trucks have been counted in the pass between 3 and 17 January, a figure as high as any reported during last year's dry season.

24 January 1967

VI-1

5. Additional information on the extensive effort that the Communists are continuing to make in order to maintain supply movements in the panhandle has been provided by a recent Pathet Lao defector. He claims that at the time of his defection in mid-December the North Vietnamese were laying telephone lines along alternate routes south of Route 9 in order to shorten interruptions caused by US air strikes. The defector, who was trained in North Vietnam and spent several years working on the Laotian road net, reported that substantial numbers of North Vietnamese troops are arrayed along the entire road system to make prompt repairs of bombed road sections and to maintain a series of truck relay and repair stations. His remarks suggest that the Communists are bending every effort to keep the roads open in the panhandle.

24 January 1967

VI-2